



Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services
Karen Timberlake, Department Secretary
Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction
Elizabeth Burmaster, State Superintendent



Governor Jim Doyle

*****NEWS RELEASE*****

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Wisconsin participates in national autism education program

State is one of three to create model site classrooms in first phase of program

MADISON—State Superintendent Elizabeth Burmaster announced that the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI), the Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services (DHFS), the Waisman Center at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, three Wisconsin school districts, and one early childhood program in the state are among the first partners in an innovative national effort to improve autism education.

“Using proven methods to help students with disabilities succeed is part of our New Wisconsin Promise to provide a quality education to every child in our state,” Burmaster said. “We are delighted to be among the first partners in this national effort to provide training in effective autism education techniques to educators and administrators, including those who are not specialists in working with students with disabilities.”

Along with participants in two other states, Indiana and New Mexico, the Wisconsin partners are the first in a six-year project of the National Professional Development Center on Autism Spectrum Disorders, which is working to implement and study teaching practices proven to be effective for students with autism.

“All children deserve a healthy start, and providing a quality education is part of doing so,” said DHFS Secretary Karen Timberlake. “We are continually striving to improve services to all children with autism, and we’re proud that Wisconsin is a leader in ensuring children get the education they need and deserve.”

The DPI is working to coordinate and collect data from the three school districts, **Bonduel**, **Somerset**, and **Verona Area**, while the DHFS, through the state Birth to 3 program, is working with an early childhood program at **Dover Street Elementary in Milwaukee**. The educational agencies will implement

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one classroom as a model site at each location for the evidence-based autism education practices. In a later phase of the project, the DPI also will facilitate new autism-related professional development opportunities for educators around Wisconsin.

The National Professional Development Center on Autism Spectrum Disorders is a project of three university entities: the Waisman Center at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, the FPG Child Development Institute at the University of North Carolina, and the M.I.N.D. Institute at the University of California at Davis.

“The focus of this project is to promote the use of evidence-based practices and build on capacity for sustainable professional development and technical assistance,” said Lana Collet-Klingenberg, Ph.D., of the Waisman Center. “We are excited about partnering with education professionals to positively impact autism education in Wisconsin and other states.”

The universities will work with the first three states for two years (2008-09 and 2009-10), and will add three new states for the second cycle (2009-10 and 2010-11). By the end of the grant period, 12 states will be involved in the project.

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NOTE: This news release is available electronically at http://dpi.wi.gov/eis/pdf/dpi2008_91.pdf.